

# Childhood obesity link to parents

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The relationships between children and their parent of the same gender in the earliest years of life could be the key to understanding why some young people become obese and others do not, new research conducted by the EarlyBird Diabetes Study has shown.

A study published today in the [International Journal of Obesity](#) indicates that girls whose mothers are classified as clinically obese are significantly more likely to struggle with weight problems in childhood, with a similar relationship existing between obese fathers and their sons.

The findings showed that the same trend does not exist between mothers and their sons and fathers and their daughters - meaning that behavioural, rather than genetic, factors could be the key to unravelling the causes of the current [obesity epidemic](#) affecting [children](#) in the UK.

The Study's Director, Professor Terry Wilkin said:

"Any genetic link between obese parents and their children would be indiscriminate of gender. The clearly defined gender-assortative pattern which our research has uncovered is an exciting one because it points towards behavioural factors at work in childhood obesity.

"These findings could turn our thinking on childhood obesity dramatically on its head. Money and resources have focussed on children over the past decade in the belief that obese children become obese adults, and that prevention of obesity in children will solve the problem in adulthood. EarlyBird's evidence supports the opposite hypothesis -

that children are becoming obese due to the influence of their same-sex parents, and that we will need to focus on changing the behaviour of the adult if we want to combat obesity in the child."

Source: The Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry

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